

March 24, 2004

The Honorable Carl R. Johnson, Chairman
Senate Environment Committee
Legislative Office Building, Room 104
Concord, New Hampshire 03301

Re: HB 1131, establishing a committee to study exotic aquatic weeds and species

Dear Chairman Johnson:

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on HB 1131, which would establish a legislative committee to study the spread of exotic aquatic weeds in New Hampshire waters, and potential means to eliminate the spread of such species. The Department of Environmental Services (DES) sees this as an opportunity to provide additional information to the legislature on the state's existing exotic aquatic weed control program, and as an open forum to consider the future on exotic weed control programs in New Hampshire.

DES is directed under RSA 487:17, II to prevent the introduction and further dispersal of exotic aquatic weeds and to manage or control exotic aquatic weed infestations in the surface waters of the state. To do this we have developed, and continue to make improvements to, a comprehensive exotic aquatic plant control program that is a leader in New England. The foundation of the program is a three-part strategy to (1) stop the spread of exotic aquatic weeds through education and outreach, including signage at all boat ramps (in partnership with the Fish and Game Department) and a Lake Host program (in partnership with the New Hampshire Lakes Association) at numerous boat ramps to inspect boats and educate boaters; (2) train and empower volunteer Weed Watchers to detect new infestations so they can be controlled before they become established; and (3) provide temporary control of existing infestations through a matching grants program for milfoil control projects. Under RSA 487, this work is funded by fees on boat registrations. Specifics of program activities are provided in the *Report of the New Hampshire Exotic Aquatic Species Program* that presents program activities and costs and also discusses weed prevention and control techniques (copy enclosed).

DES looks forward to working with the committee in this effort.

Thank you again for this opportunity to comment. Please call either me at 271-3503 or Paul Currier at 271-3289 if you have any questions or need additional information.

Very truly yours,

Michael P. Nolin
Commissioner

cc: Representative Richard Drisko
Representative Richard Cooney